

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10
LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 AGRE-00 TRSE-00 DODE-00
PA-01 USIA-06 SP-02 /058 W
-----109165 211946Z /46

R 211652Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3537
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
USMISSION USNATO
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 01858

USEEC AND USOECD ALSO FOR EMBASSIES

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, SP
SUBJECT: LABOR PLANT ELECTIONS: THE GOVERNMENT VIEW

REF: MADRID 1792

1. DURING CALL ON LABOR UNDERSECRETARY JERONIMO AROZAMENA ON FEBRUARY 17 TO REVIEW US RELATIONSHIP WITH ILO (SEPTTEL), LABATT RAISED MATTER OF CURRENT LABOR ELECTIONS (REFTTEL). AROZAMENA APPEARED ANXIOUS TO PASS ON MINISTRY'S (AS WELL AS HIS OWN) VIEWS, AS HIGHLIGHTED BELOW. HE ALSO NOTED GOVT CONCERN REGARDING UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM AND AFFIRMED HIS BELIEF THAT LABOR WOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE MONCLOA PACT.
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2. AROZAMENA SAID HE WAS, OF COURSE, AWARE THAT THE MINISTRY OF LABOR WAS UNDER ATTACK FOR THE SLOW AND ALLEGEDLY "SELECTIVE" MANNER IN WHICH IT WAS RELEASING LABOR ELECTION DATA. HE WISHED TO ASSURE THE EMBASSY THAT THE GOVT WAS "PLAYING IT STRAIGHT" AND GIVING OUT THE RESULTS WEEKLY AS THEY CAME IN FROM THE LABOR MINISTRY

DELEGATES IN THE VARIOUS PROVINCES. WITH RESPECT TO THE CURRENT LARGE GAP (13 PERCENT--SEE REFTTEL) FAVORING THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED WORKERS' COMMISSIONS (SWC) OVER THE SOCIALIST UGT, HE BELIEVED THAT WOULD NARROW CONSIDERABLY AS THE ELECTIONS TAILED OUT. ABOUT ONE MILLION WORKERS (OUT OF 6 MILLION THEORETICALLY ELIGIBLE) HAD ALREADY VOTED AND THE FIGURE MIGHT REACH TWO TO TWO AND A HALF MILLION BY THE END.

3. AROZAMENA SAID IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT THE UNIONS WERE PUSHING HARDEST FOR ELECTIONS IN THE PLANTS WHERE THEY BELIEVED THEY HAD A CHANCE TO WIN OR MAKE A STRONG SHOWING. FOR THAT REASON, HE ARGUED THAT THE NON-UNION "INDEPENDENTS (10 PERCENT OF THE PLANT DELEGATES ELECTED SO FAR) WERE ACTUALLY STRONGER THAN THE STATISTICS REFLECT. HE WAS ALSO OF THE OPINION THAT MANY OF THE VOTERS LISTED AS "UNAFFILIATED" (CURRENTLY 22 PERCENT) WERE ACTUALLY INDEPENDENTS. PURSUING THIS LINE OF REASONING FURTHER, HE DECLARED THAT HE SAW A CLEAR INDICATION OF AN EMERGING "THIRD CURRENT" OF CENTER-ORIENTED TRADE UNIONISM, SUPPLEMENTING THE EXISTING SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST LABOR FORCES. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT EARMARK ANY OF THEM AS A POSSIBLE RALLYING POINT FOR SUCH A MOVEMENT, HE MENTIONED THREE OF THE SMALL NON-MARXIST TRADE UNIONS CONTESTING THE ELECTIONS: THE CDT, THE CGT, AND THE CTI. (NOTE: TOGETHER, THESE THREE UNIONS HAVE ELECTED LESS THAN 2
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PERCENT OF THE DELEGATES.)

4. THE UNDERSECRETARY WARNED THAT ANY ELECTION TRENDS MUST BE INTERPRETED IN THE LIGHT OF THE SO FAR VERY SMALL PARTICIPATION OF PLANTS (7.5 PERCENT) AND WORKERS (SOMETHING MORE THAN 15 PERCENT). IT WAS HIS PERSONAL VIEW THAT THE SWC HAD HIT ITS CEILING IN SPAIN. AS A MATTER OF FACT, IT RISKED LOSING MEMBERS AS OTHER LATER-STARTING UNIONS (ESPECIALLY THE UGT) COMMENCED OFFERING UNION SERVICES THEY HAD BEEN UNABLE TO PROVIDE THEIR MEMBERSHIP EARLIER. THUS, HE CONTINUED, MANY SWC VOTERS WERE NOT COMMUNISTS, BUT WORKERS WHO BELIEVED THAT AT THIS POINT IN TIME THEY COULD GET BETTER SERVICE AND PROTECTION FROM THE SWC. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE REPEATED A STATISTIC WHICH THE EMBASSY HAD HEARD FROM OTHER SOURCES, I.E. THAT THE SWC IN THE MADRID AREA SURPASSED THE UGT 10-TO-1 IN TERMS OF LABOR LAWYERS AVAILABLE TO ASSIST UNION MEMBERS.

5. AROZAMENA MADE A SPECIAL POINT OF THROWING SOME BOUQUETS AT THE BASQUE STV WHICH HAD DONE SO WELL IN THE BASQUE REGION. HE CHARACTERIZED THE STV AS A "REASONABLE" UNION WHICH -- ALTHOUGH IT HAD SOME TIES WITH THE PNV

NATIONALIST BASQUE PARTY -- WAS MAINLY CONCERNED WITH ECONOMIC RATHER THAN POLITICAL TRADE UNIONISM AND WAS PROVING TO BE A FAIR NEGOTIATOR WITH BASQUE FIRMS.

6. UNEMPLOYMENT. THIS REMAINED A PRINCIPAL AREA OF CONCERN FOR THE GOVT. THAT DAY'S CABINET MEETING HAD ON AN URGENT BASIS DECIDED TO ALLOCATE SOME 6000 MILLION PTAS (APPROXIMATELY \$75 MILLION) TO COMBAT UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR -- PARTICULARLY IN THE HARD-HIT AREAS OF ANDALUCIA, EXTREMADURA, AND THE CANARIES. THE FUNDS WOULD SET INTO MOTION LABOR-INTENSIVE PUBLIC WORKS AND AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS, MANY OF WHICH WOULD BE CHanneLED THROUGH TWO AGRICULTURAL AGENCIES: IRYDA (INSTITUTE OF

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MADRID 01858

USEEC AND USOECD ALSO FOR EMBASSIES

AGRARIAN REFORM AND DEVELOPMENT) AND ICONA (NATIONAL PARK SERVICE - INCLUDING WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT).

7. MONCLOA PACT. THE UNDERSECRETARY WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT THE UNIONS WOULD BY AND LARGE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE PACT. WAGE DEMANDS SO FAR INDICATED THAT THIS WAS THE CASE. NATURALLY, THERE WERE A NUMBER OF STUMBLING BLOCKS SUCH

AS VARIATIONS IN THE SOCIAL SECURITY LEVY INCREASES WHICH
IN MANY CASES (IN LARGER FIRMS) WERE APPARENTLY EXCEEDING
THE 18 PERCENT LIMIT SET BY THE MONCLOA PACT. AROZAMENA
STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING THE COOPERATION OF
OPPOSITION POLITICAL ELEMENTS IF THE GOVT'S ECONOMIC
MEASURES WERE TO SUCCEED.

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8. COMMENT. PERHAPS OF GREATEST INTEREST WAS AROZAMENA'S
PERCEPTION OF A PEAKED-OUT SWC TRYING TO HOLD THE LINE
AGAINST A FAST-CLOSING UGT. ALSO, HIS PUSHING OF THE THEME
OF AN EMERGING NON-MARXIST TRADE UNION ALTERNATIVE IS
ENTIRELY IN KEEPING WITH GOVT AND UCD VIEWS ON THIS MATTER.
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